

December 31, 2008

Subject: Request for Oregon RBEG proposals

Dear friend of rural business development in Oregon!

We are contacting you because of your potential interest in applying for a “Rural Business Enterprise Grant” (RBEG) in Oregon.

[Note that this RBEG solicitation is separate and distinct from other grant opportunities that we have sent recently via e-mail – i.e., the Native American RBEG concept paper request and the general and Native American Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) concept paper requests.]

#### THE RBEG PROGRAM:

Through our RBEG program, USDA Rural Development (RD) provides grant funds for PRECISELY-TARGETED technical assistance, training, feasibility studies, and other activities that support the development of SPECIFICALLY-IDENTIFIABLE small business enterprises in rural areas. Eligible applicants are nonprofits, public bodies, and tribes.

#### DEADLINE!

If you are indeed interested, please review the following guidance and submit a proposal as outlined below by March 2, 2009.

#### EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Everything you need to know about the RBEG program and to respond to this opportunity is available on RD-Oregon’s RBEG web site:  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/rbeg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/rbeg.htm)

#### FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Although the exact amount of RBEG funding available is not yet certain, it is likely that there will be about \$356,000 of RBEG funds allocated to Oregon (roughly the same amount as last year). Although the RBEG program is relatively small, it can still be an invaluable tool in rural business development.

Last year our office received 69 Oregon proposals seeking \$996,000, out of which we awarded 38 grants totaling \$356,000, with sizes ranging from \$3,500-\$23,000.

#### TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING:

In order to distribute the limited RBEG funds among as many worthy proposals as possible, we are encouraging proposals of \$15,000-\$20,000 or less, and not more than \$25,000. Smaller proposals in the \$10,000 range are greatly preferred.

Technical assistance/problem-solving proposals are encouraged over real estate and revolving loan fund projects.

In developing your proposal, please pay particular attention to the priority scoring system described in the “RBEG program overview” link on our web site. It is used by USDA to select among RBEG applicants. Design your project to maximize your project’s priority score and thereby improve your prospects of success.

Note that in order to be competitive, a minimum 1:1 match with nonfederal funds is advised.

In FY2009, USDA’s State Director discretionary points will be awarded to projects emphasizing:

- » Downtown and historic-district revitalization (especially for projects being done in connection with the State of Oregon’s “Main Street” Program)
- » Value-added agriculture
- » Telecommunications
- » Minority business development
- » Rural health care
- » Helping small business & farmers become more energy efficient or add renewable energy
- » New and creative approaches to rural business development

In all cases, we are looking for projects that will have an immediate job benefit for rural Oregon.

#### A CONCEPT PAPER IS REQUESTED:

Since we expect to receive many more RBEG proposals than we can fund, instead of seeking full, detailed applications, we are only seeking a brief “concept paper” from prospective applicants. This will save everyone time and effort while still allowing USDA to survey the field of candidate projects.

The RBEG “Concept Paper” can be downloaded from our RBEG web site (see above). Please be succinct and clear in completing it. When finished, a “Concept Paper” should

not need to be more than 2 pages, and no advantage will be given to longer proposals. Remember, we are soliciting concepts, not full RBEG application packages.

#### DEADLINE FOR CONCEPT PAPERS:

If you wish to be considered for RBEG funding in Oregon in FY2009, your RBEG “Concept Paper” should be submitted to the Oregon Rural Development State Office – preferably by e-mail to [jeff.deiss@or.usda.gov](mailto:jeff.deiss@or.usda.gov) – by not later than March 2, 2009. If you wish to send it by regular mail, our address is: USDA Rural Development, Attn: Business & Cooperative Programs, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Ste. 801, Portland, OR 97232.

#### THE REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS:

This year, we will again use a geographic allocation of RBEG funds within Oregon corresponding to RD’s organizational structure of four Area Offices – one in eastern Oregon (Pendleton), one in central Oregon (Redmond), one in northwestern Oregon (Corvallis), and one in southwestern Oregon (Roseburg). 20% of the RBEG funds will be allotted to each area, with the remaining 20% used as either a state reserve or for projects that transcend area boundaries.

Concept proposers are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposals with either the Area Director or the Business Programs Specialist responsible for the part of the state where they will be working. Contact information for these individuals is online at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/bizcontact.htm>

Feedback will be provided to all Concept Paper proposers. Proposals that appear to be most competitive will be especially encouraged to submit full applications, though of course everyone will be welcome to apply formally.

Tentatively, we will be asking for full applications by around April 27 (assuming the final FY2009 Oregon State RBEG allocation is in place by then). This should allow us to make RBEG award announcements by early May so that projects can start by not later than June.

#### ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Historically, once State allocations are expended, it has been common practice for USDA to consider additional RBEG applications for funding from a national competition process. It is still too soon to know any details about this, but we will work with the RBEG applicant community on this opportunity once Oregon’s State RBEG funds have been awarded.

## QUESTIONS?

If you have questions or concerns, please contact anyone on Oregon's Business & Cooperative Programs staff. Our contact information is on-line at:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/or/bizcontact.htm>

Thanks for your efforts in Oregon rural business development. We look forward to working with you on your innovative proposals!